

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

HONORING THE PASSING OF
RAFAEL DIAZ-BALART

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart and many fond memories that I stand here today to honor the life and invaluable legacy of Dr. Rafael Diaz-Balart. As a prominent attorney and elected official in his native land of Cuba, Rafael quickly rose to the position of majority leader in the Cuban Republic's House of Representatives before Fidel Castro illegally seized power in the 1959 Communist revolution.

As majority leader, Rafael warned his legislative colleagues of Castro's desire of absolute power, a desire that would be achieved by any means necessary. In a prophetic speech, Rafael said in the legislature of Castro's thugs, "They do not want peace. They do not want a national solution. They do not want democracy or elections or fraternity. Fidel Castro and his group seek only one thing, power, and total power at that. And they want to achieve that power through violence, so that their total power will enable them to destroy every vestige of the constitution and law in Cuba, to institute the most cruel, most barbaric tyranny, a tyranny that would teach the people the true meaning of tyranny."

How sadly correct Rafael Diaz-Balart was so many years ago. Vigilantly opposed to the Communist tyranny and oppression that had taken hold of his country, Dr. Diaz-Balart and his family fled the island. Shortly after leaving Cuba, he founded the White Rose Party, an organization dedicated to fighting against Castro's dictatorial regime and restoring democracy and liberty in Cuba. In addition, his testimony to the United States Senate in 1960 alerted the Nation to the dangers of Castro's government. In his testimony, Rafael provided evidence of Castro's oppression and his abuse of the political dissidents as well as the global threat of communism.

He, like my father Enrique Ros and so many others who fled Cuba due to Castro's dictatorial regime in these four decades, dreamed of a free Cuba, a country where human rights would once again be respected, where political prisoners would be freed, where a democratic multiparty political system would flourish and a free market economy would thrive, thus allowing the Cuban people and their foreign economic partners to own their own businesses and to prosper.

A passionate and dedicated leader, Rafael was a relentless defender of human rights. He along with so many other human rights activists brought Cuba's ongoing human rights violations to the attention of the United States Government, to the attention of the American people and, indeed, to the international community. In addition, Rafael demonstrated his ability to fight not only for the Cuban and the Cuban-American community but for all oppressed people throughout the world. His determination and his resoluteness have guided me in my own career as a public servant from my beginnings in the Florida State legislature to my current position in the United States Congress. I was inspired by his endless commitment to the Cuban people and to all individuals living under dictatorial rule.

His sons Rafael, Jose, Lincoln and Mario continue this legacy of promoting peace, liberty and the rule of law, a legacy that began with Rafael Diaz-Balart, Sr., the namesake of Florida International University's college of law. Perhaps Rafael's strongest political legacy is the one that he has passed on to his children and to his grandchildren, especially his sons Jose and Rafael and our esteemed colleagues serving with us in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressmen LINCOLN and MARIO DIAZ-BALART.

I am privileged to have known and to have worked closely with Rafael and the Diaz-Balart family throughout my professional career as a legislator. Together with them, I will continue to promote a free and democratic Cuba and democracy throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Dr. Rafael Diaz-Balart, who was a wonderful friend, a loving husband, a dedicated father and one of the most outstanding members of our Florida community. My thoughts and my prayers go out to his family during this difficult time. He will be sorely missed by all.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my special order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

LOBBYING REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, in the past few months and days, a constant stream of headlines has opened the public's eye to the relationship between lawmakers and lobbyists and what goes on in this town and how we make our laws. Professional lobbyists have become a virtual "back office" for Congress and Congressmen, serve as travel agents, employment agencies and authors of legislation. In the past 6 years, lobbying expenditures have more than doubled to \$3 billion annually, nearly twice as much as we spend on campaigns. That is what they spend trying to influence the type of legislation we have. Whether it is on pharmaceutical legislation, prescription drugs, whether it is on the tax legislation, whether it is on energy legislation, the amount spent by lobbyists has doubled trying to influence the Members of Congress.

Yet while the number of professional lobbyists and their fees have increased, only one in five lobbyists required to register actually does. Of the 250 top lobbying firms, 210 have failed to file one or more of the necessary documents. The bottom line is that the special interests benefit from weak reporting, nonexistent oversight and toothless penalties while the credibility of the United States Congress, this entire institution and the Members who serve in it, suffers.

We have had in the past debates about campaign finance reform and proper debates about the relationship between donors and congressional candidates. It is time now to have a debate and pass legislation about the relationship between professional lobbyists and Members of Congress. The last major lobbying reforms were over 10 years ago. It is time to update our laws to reflect the explosive growth and increasing influence of professional lobbyists on this institution, the people's House.

For all those reasons, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MEEHAN), the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) and I have introduced the Lobbying and Ethics Reform Act. Our bill creates a code of official conduct for Congress. This code of conduct would close the revolving door by requiring former Members and staff to wait 2 years before coming back to lobby the institution they had worked at prior. The bill also ends the practice of lobbyists serving as congressional travel agents by arranging lavish junkets for Members. Our bill would require congressional travel to conform to expense guidelines similar to those of other government employees, so it is actually the work that trip is intended to do and work on that trip rather than it becoming a lavish vacation and a working trip in name only. We also require lobbyists to disclose their past connections, previous Hill employers and financial activities on a public database.

The Meehan-Emanuel bill increases the penalties for failing to comply with the Lobbying Disclosure Act. It also